

**Minutes
Newton Planning Commission
July 27, 2004
Council Chambers
City Hall**

The regular meeting of the Newton Planning Commission was held at 7:30 p.m. on July 27, 2004 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Members

Present: Brevard Arndt
Gary Corne
Kent Elliott
Stan Gabriel
Clinton Sigmon
Stan Winstead

Members

Absent: Ken Simmons

Staff

Present: Glenn Pattishall, AICP Planning Director
Alex Fulbright, AICP Planner

Others: None

Chairman Arndt called the meeting to order.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes May 26, 2004 Meeting

Chairman Arndt asked for consideration of the minutes as presented. There being no corrections, he ruled that the minutes were approved as presented.

Item 3: Presentation of Draft Plan – Eastside Area Specific Plan

Mr. Arndt recognized Mr. Pattishall to make some introductory comments.

Mr. Pattishall stated that the staff and Planning Commission had been working on the Plan for about a year and a half and that the staff is ready to present and explain a rough draft of the Plan. He explained that the staff would like to have the Planning Commission's feedback as to the form and format of the Plan whether the Plan would be an effective tool and appropriate for use by the Planning Commission and the City Council and finally that there be an agreement as to public involvement in terms of review of the final plan and public forums and public hearings. He then recognized Mr. Fulbright to make a presentation.

Mr. Fulbright reviewed the scope of the Plan, explaining that each section of the Plan had commentary on existing conditions, development guidance, and policy statements for each of the applicable topics. Topics were transportation, utilities, economic development, environment, community character, government and land use.

Mr. Fulbright reviewed each topic or section in detail, using a Powerpoint presentation. He had maps for the applicable sections.

During the discussion of transportation related issues, **Mr. Elliott** questioned the proposal for stubouts in the City's current practice. **Mr. Fulbright** responded the City currently does require stubouts but that the City had not been as aggressive as it should have been in the past. He said the purpose for stubouts is that it promotes connectivity between neighborhoods. He explained that the types of street stubouts would depend on the types of streets that they would potentially serve and the density they would serve.

Mr. Elliott also suggested that the City consider modifying the entryway medians to developments, scaling them back from the intersections so that there is enough radius for folks to get in and out of developments. He said precautions also needed to be taken that arterial and collector streets function properly in terms of carrying traffic efficiently and effectively. He said that through movements need to be encouraged into the City and not around or away from the City as some of the bypass plans have indicated in the past.

Mr. Corne suggested that street lighting be required on all new streets and also suggested that the City evaluate the need for shelters at Piedmont Wagon bus stops.

Mr. Pattishall said that the staff is currently reviewing the Piedmont Wagon services and bus stops. He said that Piedmont Wagon provides services primarily to handicapped and social program beneficiaries although it is open to anyone who wants to ride. Those are the main clientele that the bus is used by. **Mr. Elliott** and **Mr. Corne** both said that stops need to be considered for availability in high employment areas and that schedules need to be better posted and advertised. **Mr. Elliott** suggested that a Hickory/Newton express bus service be pursued.

Under the economic development section, **Mr. Pattishall** explained that the purpose of market analysis for things such as new shopping centers and commercial developments would be to justify the need for and the market demand for such new facilities so as to avoid the abandonment of existing and viable commercial areas.

Under the environmental section, **Mr. Fulbright** explained that stream buffers would ultimately be required by new stormwater regulations that the City will soon be under.

Under community character, **Mr. Arndt** said he was opposed to prohibiting cul-de-sacs and explained that cul-de-sacs do have their appropriate place in certain developments. He suggested that a wording change was needed. It was agreed upon by the Planning Commission that the use of cul-de-sacs should be minimized to the extent feasible.

Under land use, **Mr. Elliott** said that the planning area was ripe for infill development. **Mr. Arndt** said he was opposed to limiting commercial development opportunities and shouldn't restrict free trade. **Mr. Elliott** and **Mr. Fulbright** both said the intent of the Plan would be to protect existing and viable commercial areas so that they don't become abandoned for new development.

Mr. Fulbright said that 7,000 residents is a threshold for grocery stores. He explained that allowing leapfrog development is detrimental to existing and viable development.

Mr. Fulbright stated that adaptive reuse of abandoned commercial areas is a strategy and desire that is pursued by many people. However, the need for this can be avoided if proper planning and market analysis techniques are employed when considering new development proposals.

Mr. Elliott questioned if abandoned shopping centers can be designated as a nuisance. **Mr. Fulbright** responded that typically shopping centers go into a progression of decline but so long as they meet minimum maintenance standards, they cannot be considered a nuisance.

Mr. Arndt explained that most shopping centers have multiple uses in addition to an anchor and typically the entire centers don't become vacant.

Mr. Fulbright mentioned the City of Charlotte's requirement for a demolition bond for new developments, that within a period of one year after vacating, if there is not any adaptive reuse of the shopping centers, then they have to be demolished.

With no further discussion, **Mr. Arndt** recognized Mr. Pattishall for additional comments.

Mr. Pattishall stated that he would like to have feedback from the Planning Commission as to the form, the usability and the applicability of the ordinance to the issues. **Mr. Arndt** said that it was good and understandable. He said that maps need to be made easier to read and need to be within the sections of the Plan that they apply to, and he felt the Plan did address the issues identified appropriately.

Mr. Arndt and **Mr. Elliott** both stated that the difficulty will be balancing growth with the types of uses, that with this Plan there are a lot of unknowns and the intent of this Plan is to steer development into appropriate locations and to be of an appropriate type.

There was consensus that the staff present a final draft to the Planning Commission at the August Planning Commission meeting. At that time, the Planning Commission will then schedule a public forum with the effective property owners for a meeting in September and it will hold a public hearing in its October meeting with the intentions of adopting the Plan.

Item 4: Old Business

There was none.

Item 5: New Business

Mr. Pattishall stated that Carl Jenkins had issued an invitation to the Planning Commission members for an open house and dedication service on August 4th between 1:00 and 3:00 P.M. for the new funeral home on Startown Road.

Item 6: Reports

Mr. Pattishall reviewed the Code Enforcement and Permit Reports for the month of May and June.

Item 7: Adjournment

With no further discussion, meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn J. Pattishall/AICP
Secretary

ds